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STATE FOR PRM/AF/GPARKER, AF/C/MASHRAF, S/CRS/RRIPLEY/  
JBEIK/JVANCE  
LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [KCRS](#) [CD](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: CHAD'S OURE CASSONI REFUGEE CAMP POSES UNIQUE RISKS

REF: A. 2006 NDJAMENA 1249 B. NDJAMENA 65

11. (SBU) Summary. Oure Cassoni refugee Camp, close to the Sudan border, continues to be highly politicized. Both the camp and the host community of Bahai lack security (reftels). The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is active in trying to repatriate Sudanese soldiers hospitalized in Bahai as well as others reportedly held as POWs by Sudanese rebels inside Chad. End Summary.

#### Oure Cassoni Refugee Camp Remains Extremely Politicized

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12. (U) The Oure Cassoni Refugee Camp, housing over 26,000

Sudanese refugees, remains extremely politicized and under the influence of Sudanese rebels. During a meeting with the USAID Humanitarian Assistance Team last month, several attendees insisted on raising political issues with EmbOff, rather than the humanitarian assistance issues the meeting was convened for, and presenting a package of political mini-banners. Several attendees later reported intimidation and coercion by camp leaders to suppress certain views. One view camp leaders tried to suppress is that the camp is not secure (as evidenced by assaults and carjackings occurring within the camp itself). Due to the camp's location close to the border, this is one of two refugee camps that UNHCR would like to move further away from the border. However, the camp leaders want it to remain where it is, and continue to serve as a rebel rear base.

#### Insecurity and Lack of Projects To Benefit Host Community

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13. (U) The lack of security also affects the small host community of Bahai (approximately 20 miles from the camp, and with a population estimated at 2,000 people) and other smaller villages. NGOs have their compounds here, and have to be escorted by gendarmes, even to travel short distances between compounds. All NGOs store their vehicles at night in the UNHCR compound. The prefet made a complaint (heard elsewhere) that the gendarmes would be more effective if they were from the area, rather than from elsewhere in Chad. It was reported that not all of them have firearms. The UN is in Phase IV security, which has resulted in minimum staffing for UNHCR itself and the NGOs who work in this area. NGOs report that they had projects planned for local villages, such as drilling wells, but, due to the security situation, they could only visit two of the sixteen villages in the area.

## Attacks in the Area

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¶4. (U) In addition to fighting in the area in October, there have been reports of Sudanese Air Force Antonovs dropping bombs in the area in January and more recently this month. Allegedly, on one or two occasions, the bombs struck close to the dam on Lake Cariari (the dam has made this wadi into an artificial lake, and its destruction would be devastating for Oure Cassoni). However, the consensus of people actually there is that the target was a rebel column, not the dam itself, and that the Antonovs are very inaccurate bombing platforms (they are cargo aircraft, not bombers, and the bombs are rolled off the rear cargo ramp).

## ICRC Repatriation

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¶5. (SBU) In mid-January, 14 wounded Sudanese soldiers still remained in the Bahai Hospital, where they had been brought following heavy fighting on the Sudan side of the border in early October. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is negotiating for their repatriation. The NGO community in Bahai informed EmbOff that Sudanese rebels were rumored to be holding up to 200 GoS soldiers as prisoners of war (POWs) somewhere in the general area. The presence of additional Sudanese soldiers was subsequently confirmed by the ICRC which advised that they are involved in negotiating their repatriation as well; they also report that no one on either side seems anxious for the GoS POWs to be returned.

¶6. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.  
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